

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Education and Employment
April 15, 2021

MARILEE ANDREWS: It's 10:00. I don't know if you wanted for me to call roll and then you could welcome and do virtual meeting protocol and all that. Ms. Mary, do you want me to call roll? Are you ready?

MARY TARVER: I'm on my phone so I can't, after we start the meeting, I can't see who is on the call. So will you be able to monitor it for me?

MARILEE ANDREWS: Do you want me to call roll?

MARY TARVER: Yes. If you will call roll that will be perfect.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Nicole Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: I'm here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Melissa Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Carmen Cetnar. Brenda Cosse. I will call Ms. Brenda again at the end. Mitch Iddins. Bambi Polotzola. Chris Rodriguez.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Mary Tarver.

MARY TARVER: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Temisha Sonnier.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Temisha Victorian. Sorry about that. Dr. Phil Wilson.

SUE KILLAM: Standing in for Phil today. Sue Killam.

MARILEE ANDREWS: And Dr. Sarah Fletcher.

SARAH FLETCHER: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: And Ms. Brenda, are you back yet? It actually looks like even without Ms. Brenda we actually do have a quorum.

MARY TARVER: Okay. Thank y'all very much. Well, I appreciate y'all changing dates and times. This is not normally the week I think we have our council meeting. But I will be out of town next week, so I

appreciate it. And I want to welcome everybody, and we will get started. The agenda was sent out and there is a summary from our February the tenth meeting. If anybody would like to make a motion to approve it.

MITCH IDDINS: This is Mitch. I will make the motion to approve it.

MARY TARVER: Hey Mitch. Thanks. And a second?

SARAH FLETCHER: Sarah Fletcher. I will second.

MARY TARVER: Thank you Sarah. All right. Well, we will get started with the business today. And ask Dr. Sarah Fletcher if she will give an update from Louisiana Department of Education.

SARAH FLETCHER: Thanks for letting me go first. I am going to have to jump off at the end of the meeting. Appreciate you moving the agenda around for me. Just wanted to go through some quick updates. We did find out the state was ranked seventh for in person instruction according to a national survey. So around the country it seems like Louisiana has been able to meet back in person more than in other places. Which is really good news. We also have released some guidance for lots of programs that can be done to help students catch up with any of the lost learning that might have happened. And also released some guidance related to spending pandemic related funds and stuff found in the pandemic relief guidance and resources library.

A quick update on the IDEA budget application. We're currently still within the public comment period for a draft of the application for the next federal fiscal year. And as you are probably aware, just outlines how we're planning to spend funding in 15 different categories. But we do know that we are expecting to get more money through the American relief package. We have not gotten those final allocations yet. So when we receive those, we were given guidance from the federal government to post the draft budget with our allocations from last year. And once we receive the final allocations to immediately update the draft on the website, which is still our plan. But we

have to date not yet received those final allocations. So you can find the current, what we have posted currently on our website. And we will make sure to note very clearly when we do update the draft.

I wanted to also give you an update about SIR enhancements. Some of you may have heard me talk about this in other places. Not sure how many of you interact with the SIR platform. A really important way for school systems across Louisiana to maintain special education records. And so this is the warehouse where a student moves from one system to another the records can follow them and really where IEPs are held. And we were in the process of making several updates to the system. The first of which is going to roll out this summer and be implemented for the next school year. About our training reevaluation process. Right now every two years students get a reevaluation. Sometimes that evaluation is waived. And the way a waiver has looked in the past has varied widely around the state. So what we have done, and we ran a pilot this year with 24 system schools around the state to use the platform to ensure some basic information about every student is updated every three years so that IEP teams have the best and most update date information possible when they're making decisions about services for students. We're really excited about that. And it is going to be a big change. And it may change the way evaluations come to families. It may look more like what a traditional IEP looks like. It's going to print out in the same format. But it will clearly say reevaluation on the top. It will have lots of student records and history right there. So everyone can make sure they have the most update information.

And so that's going to roll out for this coming school year. At the same time working on major enhancements. The platform I don't think has really undergone any significant upgrades in probably 15 years. Working on the architecture of the system to bring it up to 2021 and make sure that it's user friendly and also creating some rules in there to

encourage best practice. So want to make sure that's aligned with the policy that we have. I am really excited about this. I think it will be really transformative. I know every adult that works with students with disabilities around the state in school systems uses SIR. So I really think this is going to be a really interesting tool to address best practice.

The other updates I have are about special ed academy. About to open up, just opened the applications for the upcoming school year. This is for novice special education leaders around the state. So SPED coordinators, SPED directors if they are new to their role, they get paired with a mentor and just get training and get to work with them around the year. The application is open on April 12th and close on the 14th. We also have some SEAP panel vacancies coming up. SEAP panel members serve three-year terms. The appointments are staggered so a third of the membership rolls offer every year. I think the vacancies are going to be posted to the website very shortly. And then we will be accepting applications for 30 days. We'll do interviews in May and then make appointments in June.

And other news in the department there is a fast forward initiative which the department awarded eight regional planning grants to recipients who this is designed to increase the number of high school graduates who earn an associate's degree for high demand apprenticeship before graduation. These grants are really about planning that path. So very early stages here, but you can see I think the regional planning grant recipients are Assumption Parish, Desoto, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson Parish, Rapides Richland, St. Landry and Vernon Parish. They'll have planning grants to see how they can roll this out in their school system. I'm excited to see where that goes. Could have good implications for students with disabilities in the way they graduate. And those are the updates I have. Happy to take questions.

MARY TARVER: Does anybody have any questions? I

know she will have to leave the meeting shortly, so I want to give everybody an opportunity if there is any Department of Education questions.

EBONY HAVEN: Temisha has her hand raised Mary.

MARY TARVER: Okay.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Good morning. Ms. Fletcher, I have a few questions. I was trying to keep up while you were going over everything. Forgive me if I restructure something. But to get that information back to y'all.

SARAH FLETCHER: Sorry. Your audio kind of cut out there. Could you repeat that.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Yes, ma'am. Is a deadline being provided to the entities to get that information about the application where the funding is going. Has that been, you know, provided to those entities to say y'all have a deadline of, you know, a certain time so that we're not just waiting and trying to find out where funding is going.

SARAH FLETCHER: So I have been waiting and thinking every day that we're going to get the allocations and I just keep checking my email hoping they are going to show up. I do know the deadlines for our application to be submitted, I think you're talking about the IDEA budget, right. The deadlines to the department to submit the application is May 21st. And so we are waiting on those allocations because we want to update the budget so that we can get, or we can update the draft so we can make sure the application is finalized prior to the 21st. I'm waiting and anticipating just like you are. We haven't been given anymore guidance on when those numbers are coming out.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: My next question, if I may ask, you mentioned the waiver system coming out this summer and having a new program. Just to give some transparency, I just recall several families mentioning how they really didn't understand when they were providing information saying they accepted a waiver. They did not really understand what that meant for their child. So just questioning was the parent

prospective provided for the new system.

SARAH FLETCHER: Yeah. It's been an interesting process and been talking to our partners about ensuring they are getting parent feedback. I think for some of the parents, so I would say first of all, we created the system so that there would be transparency and so parents would not be wondering what was happening every three years. Because sometimes, very honestly, in some places a waiver is just one page with a couple of checkmarks and a signature. And other places a waiver is what would count as a reevaluation in another place. That's why we're doing this. To bring more consistency to this process. So this will look, it will look like an IEP. From the parent, from what I've heard from what parents say like kind of rolling this new thing out. We've gotten positive feedback. It looks, the only thing that might be confusing it does look like something that is printed out from SIR. So had to be really clear this is counting as a reevaluation data review. It's not a waiver. It's a reevaluation data review and not an IEP. The information is all there. We've been asking the partners to solicit information and we've heard good things from parents.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: My last question, sorry. The SPED coordinator and director, the mentorship you spoke of. Where would those mentors come from? A virtual situation? And how do y'all plan to, I guess you could say, provide that across the state knowing there are a lot of rural areas that really need that and how would that hands-on-hands mentorship come about?

SARAH FLETCHER: Good question. So I know that we have a great group of mentors from around the state and I think people are paired sort of regionally. But not exactly sure about the specifics. I do know it's been virtual this year. I know they are working together. I can tell you, I can give you my colleagues email address if you would like to reach out for more information. It's rachel.brown@la.gov and she can give you all the information about the academy.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Thank you. Appreciate that.

MARY TARVER: Is there anybody else that has any questions?

EBONY HAVEN: There are no more hands raised and I don't see any comments in the chat.

SARAH FLETCHER: Courtney has her hand raised.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sorry Courtney.

COURTNEY RYLAND: That's okay. And it's really a request Dr. Fletcher. If you would please let us know when those three vacancies have been posted so we can get that information shared with our council members and with our public as well, please.

SARAH FLETCHER: Definitely will.

MARY TARVER: All right. Is there anything else for Dr. Fletcher? Thank you for joining us today. Help to get our quorum going. Appreciate it. And then you will let us know about the stuff posted on the website and the IDEA information too. Good deal. All right. Thank you.

SARAH FLETCHER: Thank you so much.

MARY TARVER: Melissa, do you have update for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes, ma'am. Good morning everyone. Happy to be here with you all. A couple updates and then if y'all have anything else y'all would like me to discuss, happy to do that. Just an update on our offices. We do remain, all of our offices are open. Most of them are by appointment. But we are also seeing clients virtually. We are continuing to try to improve our processes. This has really given us an opportunity to get some momentum with our electronic processes. So we have electronic signature pads that we are rolling out to our staff. We also have a new vendor module that will be rolling out soon in our aware system which is our case management system. Help us to receive information and invoices and things like that from vendors. So we are excited about that.

But we are also still trying to get equipment out. Not all of our regions have their laptops yet, but we are working on that. OCS has their priorities and I

think it's been a little more difficult right now to get in equipment. But we are hoping soon all of our staff will have laptops in the event that we have to go home again. Hopefully, we will not. But so that we will be more prepared next time. We had staff going home with desktops. Which as you can imagine was a little difficult. But we're definitely trying to improve our processes there.

Once again, an update on the REDS. Rehabilitation employment development specialist position. We still only have five. We have eight regions and trying to get a REDS for each region. But we still have vacancies in Alexandria, New Orleans, and Houma. I think we're actively recruiting, but had some difficulties recruiting in those particular regions. We are having difficulty with recruitment. A lot of our positions, some of it has to do with the level of pay. And we're looking at some different options for that so that we can recruit qualified staff.

We're still, we still have pending with our legal department some promulgation. I wanted to keep it fresh on everyone's mind. We will send it out when the comment period starts. But we are doing some promulgation. The two main things, some language they are cleaning up. When we moved from department of Social Services to Louisiana Workforce Commission some of that wasn't changed in our rule. But the primary two things is our order of selection categories. We have five right now. That's how we prioritize services depending on funding. And we're going from five order of selection groups to three. And then the other major thing, which is actually in affect right now because of an emergency rule, but will be put into the rule permanently, will be the change in our financial need status. It allows us the capability of going up to 500 percent of the poverty guideline for our services based on financial need. Whereas before it was 250 percent. Increasing the amount of individuals that we can serve.

Preemployment transition services. We're still continuing our efforts for state wideness for

preemployment transition services. I have two individuals who work in that section, Sigman Morel and Nicole Miller. And also now a program manager Stacy Mars who now manages preemployment transition services. She is new to management, not new to LRS. Many of you probably know her. She's been the program manager for quality assurance. And now she has taken over the role of program manager for preETS. So still receiving, probably will be receiving for many years, technical assistance from both RSA and the different RSA funded technical assistant centers just to improve our services. We're still looking at some additional things that we might be able to add to our menu for preETS. Just making sure we do that in a responsible manner. We want to make sure everyone has access to these services. And that we have, we don't just want the services out there, we want them to be good and meaningful to these students. It's a work in progress, but still working on that.

And the last update we have, also a technical assistance grant where we are receiving with the Office of Behavioral Health in an effort to improve our services to individuals with serious mental illness. We are going to have some pilot projects in Houma and in Baton Rouge. They're going to be a little bit less intensive that we originally thought. This grant, something happened with it. There was a long period where we weren't able to do any activity. When they finally came back and said we could do activities they only gave our subject matters experts ten hours of time. If you know anything about technical assistance grants, ten hours is not a lot of time. But we met with some of the LGE, local governing entity staff and the LRS staff from these two regions in our first meeting to kind of discuss how things flow now. And we will receive technical assistance from our subject matters experts who for those of you who may know him, a national consultant, Jim Maroni, just to help improve our processes. Improve, expedite processes. He has experience in not only vocational rehabilitation, but

in the mental health field. He is going to be helping us with that. And we are going to have a zoom in May with LRS, LGE staff as well as a lot of different mental health providers just to educate them on what we're doing and just employing individuals with disabilities. At the Office of Behavioral Health, not that they haven't done employment before, but it hasn't been a major emphasis and they have definitely changed that. I have been very impressed with the amount of effort they are putting to this. They recently invited one of my staff to do some IPS training. Which is it-- oh, lord. Sue help me. I know what IPS stands for.

SUE KILLAM: Individual placement and support.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I was thinking individual placement and I was thinking model. Well, that's not right.

SUE KILLAM: I know you know it.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sorry about that. They have been doing some IPS training. And they are really getting their head around this and it's going to take some time because I think they are going to try to fund some of this. But it's Medicaid. So there's a process there. But they are having the discussions and they are actively in the process of adding employment as part of their service provisions. Very excited about that.

So that's all of my updates. But if anybody has any questions or any other topics that I didn't cover that you would like me to discuss.

MITCH IDDINS: This is Mitch. I had a quick question. What order of selection are you serving right now?

MELISSA BAYHAM: We're serving one through four. But typically if someone ends up in order of selection group five, recently we have been able to take them off the waiting list. So right now we don't have a waiting list.

MITCH IDDINS: And you mention you are going to go from five to three. Is that what you said?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes. I can go into detail on that.

MITCH IDDINS: Just a little bit. If you wouldn't mind.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right now we have five. Meaning one is most significantly disabled. And five, all the way down to five which is non significantly disabled. We have two categories, one and two most significantly disabled and three and four are significantly disabled. And just, I think I briefly said this, but just for any individuals who are not aware. The point of the order of selection is the rehab act stipulates that we provide, if we do not have adequate funding, we're supposed to serve individuals for most significant disabilities first. This order of selection makes sure that happens. Right now if you have functional limitations in at least four areas you are order of selection group one. The reason really for this, RSA, the Rehabilitation Service Administration, they really don't like the fact that we have two most significantly disabled categories. And this is directly related to supported employment. We actually received a grant for supported employment, and we actually have separate regulations for supported employment programs. And they just didn't feel good about the fact that potentially you might have individuals who have been determined most significantly disabled and put on a waiting list while other individuals are not. So basically, we're just going to collapse, one and two will become one. And three and four will become order of selection group two. And order selection group five will become three. It will be easier for the counselors to be honest with you. But it's really related to supported employment. But like I said, the order of selection is simply to control funding or staffing. If you don't have the funding or the staff to make sure you serve individuals with the very most significant disabilities first. If that makes sense.

MITCH IDDINS: Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: Nicole has her hand raised.

NICOLE BANKS: My question is she said they had several positions open up in the different parishes,

East Baton Rouge, up in Jefferson. And then they said one in Houma. Where are those positions being posted at. Is it on the website, or is it?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Let me clarify two things. So this is actually, the one I was speaking of is just for rehabilitation employment development specialist. But I can speak to all of our positions. Those are in Houma, New Orleans and Alexandria. Now all of our positions are classified civil service positions. So they are posted on the Louisiana civil service website. But we have positions everywhere to be honest with you. I don't know which ones are open right now. Which ones have been closed. But unfortunately, we turn over staff, so we typically have positions available throughout the state.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay.

MITCH IDDINS: You mentioned you had positions statewide. Are those all listed on the civil service website?

MELISSA BAYHAM: They are. As of right now like the positions open and close. I would have to go look for you what we have open right now. But generally speaking, if you're looking for a job at LRS just subscribe to the civil service website and you will get the notifications.

MITCH IDDINS: Okay. Thank you.

MARY TARVER: Melissa, will the information about the supporting employment order of selections changes be in your, I haven't looked at the reports for next week, will they be there and discussed at the council meeting?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I have discussed order of selection before because we have been working on this promulgation for a while now. But if you want me to talk about it again, I can.

MARY TARVER: I would just mention it just in case, it seems like it's going to a significant change. We want to make sure everybody hears it.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Just to let everyone know since it was asked, so right now we actually have a

rehabilitation counselor associate position open in Lake Charles. This is basically a counselor assistant position. And we have been having, as you can imagine, a lot of difficulties recruiting in Lake Charles. If you know anybody, please send them our way. A paraprofessional position. Our Alexandria REDS position is currently posted as well.

MITCH IDDINS: Nothing in the Shreveport area?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Currently no. But I know we will have some upcoming counselor positions in Shreveport.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: I had a quick question. I was doing some reading the other day just on kind of the changes that are expected with the Biden Administration in the contrast to the last four years. So I think we may all be familiar with the quote unquote new HCBS rule. Which I think was back in 14, isn't very new anymore. It's been pushed back and pushed back. I think the date now is 2022 that states need to be in line with it. So obviously a lot of people focus on group homes and things like that. But with respect to sheltered workshops, they fall under the rule as well. Are we, as 2020 quickly approaches, which is pretty wild, has the state done an evaluation on how many of these places exist and to what extent they are appropriately using or not appropriately using HCBS dollars for the purposes of sheltered workshops? And how they should be transitioning away and what extent we are going to be able to be successful in doing that.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I am not aware. I think that would be OCDD who would have to get you that information. I can tell you because of section 511 of WIOA, which is subminimum wage there has been a lot of talk about that and the elimination of 14C certificates. I anticipate us receiving a lot more requests related to that rule. But as of right now, I don't know. I can't tell you specifically regarding sheltered workshops. As you know, we don't place our consumers into sheltered workshops. But do provide counseling to individuals in subminimum wage.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: Maybe contemplate a meeting

between you guys and OCDD. Cause I think you are absolutely right Melissa. I think once the state kind of evaluates and realizes, if this is going to be a hardship, which it very well may be. You are probably going to get an on slot, a flood of different people at the same time we may be restricting order of selection and funds and things like that just to be prepared for probably what's down the road and what could possibly be down the road. Like you said, I have no idea how many exist in the State of Louisiana. Although there should have been a transition plan a long time ago. May or may not have taken place. Those are definitely things I'm thinking of.

MELISSA BAYHAM: That sounds good. We are working on, we have an ongoing MOU with OCDD and Office of Behavioral Health. One of our WIOA mandates, but obviously a good thing to have. We're negotiating that right now. There are a lot of changes, but one thing we have things in there, any youth with a disability who is contemplating subminimum wage employment have to go through the VR program first to be determined ineligible. And one of Rosemary's comment on the document was that OCDD is not going to be allowed subminimum wage. I'm not exactly sure officially where they are on that. That's obviously going to create probably an influx of clients for us as well whenever they do that.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: Thank you.

MARY TARVER: Chris, I know it was probably a couple of years ago that we were getting updates, and I think it was from OCDD, in our committee meeting about the sheltered workshops. They were going through each one of them and doing some work. And now with the pandemic I don't know, probably the landscape has changed even more as far as them having those sheltered workshops. So maybe we need to ask for an update about that. I think that's something we need to follow up with.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: That sounds good.

MARY TARVER: We will work on that. All right.

Does anybody else have any other questions for Melissa? Okay. The next thing on the agenda is some of the contractual activities which are on our action plan. So we will get Marilee and Courtney to give us updates.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Good morning everyone. I will give you guys the first update for education and employment. And that is on our initiative hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. So in this last quarter O'Neal Communications, they finalized their campaign to create inclusive employment opportunities for people with disabilities. And then really to provide businesses and employers on how to strategy, recruiting, hiring, retaining individuals with disabilities in an inclusive work environment. Titled their campaign working together. There are ten webinars that are going to happen. One in each of LDH's region. Sixty minutes each. We are partnering with the local chambers of commerce, LRS, and Louisiana Workforce Commission. The webinars are presented by Gordon O'Neal. He is with O'Neal Communications, the contractor that the council chose. He specializes in disability advocacy issues. And Jeff Arceneaux who is an inclusive employment consultant. I'm sure a lot of us recognize his name. They are doing that together. Thus far regions two, three, seven and eight and five are completely finalized being scheduled. Registration is open so you can register. Most of those are held in April and May. Region five is in June. O'Neal has created a site where, one site where you can go and see what the initiative is about and register for these webinars. That site is linked on our website. Both under our initiatives. If you are able to navigate our website, you can find it under the initiatives. To make it easy we also have a banner up that you can just click on our home page.

And the remaining region, one, ten, four, six and nine are still being scheduled. It's a bit of a process working with the chambers of commerce and getting everybody on board. And we've had a lot of help from Melissa and different people like that

working with Gordon O'Neal, so we really appreciate that. Open if there's any questions.

MARY TARVER: The webinars that are scheduled, how does it get out to the businesses? Is the chamber of commerce sending out the information out to the businesses to register? Is that how the audience is getting, how will they know?

MARILEE ANDREWS: So the chambers of commerce have different events, employment events. Essentially once we get them on board our event becomes one of their events. Publicized the same way they publicize all of their different employment events and things like that. We also pushed out an LADDC news on this. And then that was promoted on our Facebook and our Twitter. Our Facebook has a pretty good following. Twitter is a good bit lower. But they were both pushed out on both of our social media platforms. There will be additional social media posts. Standalone posts on that.

MARY TARVER: So the other regions that haven't been scheduled will have to be finished and scheduled.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Can you repeat that.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Before the end of this year. I was asking about the other regions that haven't been scheduled. This contract, when would they have to be scheduled by to be completed for this year?

MARILEE ANDREWS: So this activity--.

MARY TARVER: Do they have until to end of this year?

MARILEE ANDREWS: I'm sorry Ms. Mary. You are glitching so I keep thinking you're finished. So this activity and the other ones that Courtney is going to update you on fall within the FFY 2021 action plan. So that runs until September 30th, 2021. So technically September 30th, 2021. But the goal and the timeline is to have these finished about a month or so before then. And then the contractor will spend the remaining month or two in his contractual obligations making those final reports, and data, and stats and things like that for the council to look at and be able to see how

effective we thought the initiative was and stuff like that. So it's five regions left. I mean I feel pretty good they are going to get them done. There has been a little bit of pushback in a couple different regions not wanting to participate. And our contractor is very diligent staying on top of that. So sort of a hurdle.

MARY TARVER: Thank you. All right. Does anybody have any questions about the seminar on hiring individuals? Okay. What about the update for Louisiana post-secondary inclusive education alliance.

EBONY HAVEN: Sorry Mary. Temisha raised her hand. I think she has a question.

MARY TARVER: Go ahead.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: I have a questions for Marilee. I'm not sure if you know or not, but I just wanted to ask what are the regions that were pushing back, that they met resistance in? If we could have more understanding on which ones weren't on board.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Right. So the New Orleans area, the person at their chamber of commerce wasn't real keen on it. I would have to get exactly who they spoke to in the New Orleans area. The takeaway he communicated they just don't do things like that. He made it sound like it was more sort of social things they do at the chamber of commerce in the New Orleans area. We talked through that. We kind of spoke with some other people at the chamber of commerce to see if we can get traction that way. And talked to him about reaching out maybe with LRS in the New Orleans area. Just another avenue that that seminar, that 60-minute seminar for the New Orleans area could still be held if ultimately the chamber of commerce did not want to participate as a backup plan. I'm open to suggestions or passing along suggestions if you guys have any or thoughts.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: I would have to brainstorm some things. But off the top of my head, no. But I do want to stress the importance for New Orleans for us to have involvement there because there is large population of kids with disabilities there in which ultimately become

adults with the same disabilities and needing that employment. I think it's unfortunate that they're not. But it's some type of way for us to be able to reach, like you said, partnering with someone else, LRS, or finding a way to get out to the community. Even finding out what is the barrier. Or maybe giving them another alternative how things would look and how important it is to have that out for them. A plus for the chamber of commerce if you ask me. Basically doing the work for them to get the information out there. A different take on what he's looking at. I'm not sure, but off the top of my head that's all I can come up with.

MARILEE ANDREWS: I agree. We'll stay on it and go through all those options.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Sue Killam has her hand raised and a comment in the chat as well.

MARY TARVER: Ms. Sue.

SUE KILLAM: Well, I guess Marilee I was wondering about lots of us who our home base is in New Orleans we have a lot of connections with a lot of employers and business organizations. Just the New Orleans chamber is probably not even as big as the Jefferson chamber of commerce. They kind of have the greater metropolitan area. And then we have greater New Orleans (inaudible) which is huge. We all use them for almost all new employment initiatives to do outreach to employers. I know they have helped us get people hired at HDC. They have helped hire people with disabilities. They have helped provide internships. Maybe I'm wondering when they come to some of these barriers how they are using existing agencies. That's all my division does is establish connections with employers. Pretty much all LRS does. I think, it's not like we could give a big list, but we can help provide feedback to them since they are getting stuck somewhere. Just wanted to offer that.

MARILEE ANDREWS: I really appreciate that. I'm also very excited you said my name correctly. I think

you might be the only person in the history of working here that's ever said my name correctly. But I really appreciate that. If it's okay with you, can I connect you and Gordon via email?

SUE KILLAM: Sure.

MARILEE ANDREWS: That would be great. Appreciate that.

EBONY HAVEN: Would you like for me to read the chat?

MARY TARVER: Yes, ma'am.

EBONY HAVEN: Susan from Southwest Louisiana says I did the information about this on the Facebook page. I shared it on the Families Helping Families Southwest Louisiana page. You have to click through several links to register. We will help get the info out. Perhaps a more direct link could be used. And Temisha Victorian says I agree with the use of a more direct link. Thank you.

MARILEE ANDREWS: So I will communicate that and get that done. The way it works at the moment is if you are on our website and you click the banner it takes you to a page that tells you all about the initiative. And then at the bottom of that page is a link that takes you to the dates and regions to register. So usually have all that on one page. So if we put it on one page that would reduce the link by one. I think is that a solution you guys like? Not sure of a shorter way other than that. I like that idea if you guys do.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Can you explain that one more time? I'm sorry.

MARILEE ANDREWS: No. It's confusing Temisha. So for most of our initiatives they are on our site, right. Under education and employment we'll have all our education initiatives. Generally how we do it you click on the link that says, I'm going to use the intimacy training for people with disabilities. Click on that link. I think that's under health. Take you to a page that describes the initiative and then has all the dates and times and the link to register. And

you would click on whichever one you wanted to register. In other words, on one page is the description and the place to register for the one you want to go to. For this particular initiative we did not make the page. The contractor, this is part of what they do is they make the pages, set up micro sites and they wanted to make their own site and so they did. And they made it, essentially, they have two pages. One page explains the initiative and then you have to click on a different page to register. So that's the main difference. So I think whenever the suggestion is a more direct link my thought would be to do it like we do most of our other initiatives where the description and the ability to register is on one page. If that makes sense.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Yes. Doing it that way or either putting the hyperlink within it. Is that how it's designed pretty much?

MARILEE ANDREWS: The hyperlink to register?

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Uh-huh.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Yes. That's how it is.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: And could a flier or something like that be done to where that could be posted or promoted or pushed out individually?

MARILEE ANDREWS: Yes.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: And have the hyperlink inside. Kind of like we do with the agenda. It's highlighted. Just one click. When I think about it, honestly, if I'm a parent or a person with a disability looking to find information after a couple clicks and I'm having to search down may not be reading through all of that. You know what I'm saying. So the easier the better just to be able to get it out there.

MARILEE ANDREWS: I will work on that for sure.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: Real quick going back to what Sue had to say in terms of different avenues to think about employment opportunities and going back to a lot of the rules and regs I have been reading that are being reinvigorated under the new administration. There is section 503 under the rehab act. Which most people

know for it basically saying employers are not allowed to discriminate against people with disabilities. Specifically federal contractors and subcontractors. Which is what most individuals know. What it also says is that if you are a contractor or subcontractor of a federal program or federal project that you actually are required to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, and promote and retain individuals with disabilities. Actually, a lot of specifics I can't remember the details of it. Most of these places don't even know about it, or ignore it, or been allowed to ignore it. Not a lot of teeth behind it. What you can do, I did this in Michigan years ago, there's a website you can go and look and put in a ZIP code in Louisiana and it will give you a list of every single contractor and subcontractor, federal contractor and subcontractor. Just an entire list of businesses and corporations that are bound by section 503 and should have an affirmative plan to recruit and hire people with disabilities. Likely not doing it. But another good place to give nudges and remind corporations and businesses of their obligations to people with disabilities.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Thank you for that. Very helpful. Will you email that to me, and I can share it with Gordon.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: Sure. Will do.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Chris if you don't mind can you put that link in the chat. Good information for everybody.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: Sure. Kind of doing it off the top of my head. I know there's tons of stuff on it. I think I found it.

MARY TARVER: That sounds like some promising avenues for the webinars to get out. I appreciate that. Are there any other questions or comments?

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Tamra Crane has a question. Says I have a question about employing individuals with disability and pay affecting benefits.

MARILEE ANDREWS: I didn't hear you fully Ebony.

There was background noise on someone's mike. Is it a question for me?

TAMRA CRANE: Can y'all hear me? So my name is Tamra Crane and I do have a business that I employ people with disabilities. And one thing that I'm recently encountering, and I kind of know like social security is going to be the main place to maybe go to, but just from experience we just did a pay increase for this person because their job and their work supports it. And so now she's like well, I can't work because I'm going to make too much money. Now she's like I need to work less hours and now we're getting less productivity out of her because we're paying her more because her productivity was there. But yet she's saying. So I'm kind of at a loss. And I'm like well now you're not doing the work we're needing you to do so why am I paying you this much. Kind of going down a spiral here.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: There's programs called WIPA work incentive planning assistance. We have one. You can contact either HDC depending on where you're located or Disability Rights Louisiana. We have specialists. And it takes a yearlong certification, and you have to do continuing education. But this exactly what they do. They navigate what is an incredibly complex list of rules typically by social security and Medicaid to try and figure out how an individual can maintain benefits while still working. Not because we're trying to cheat the system, but because those benefits often times, particularly Medicaid, through Medicaid you get certain types of special supports and services that are not ever given to you by an employer-based insurance. So get ahold of a WIPA. Again, you will find there are two programs in State of Louisiana that have these. One is the HDC, other Disability Rights Louisiana. And give that information to your employer and they will do an in-depth analysis of their benefits, their pay and then kick out reports and walk them through how they can best maximize their income, their employment while still maintaining. A huge problem.

TAMRA CRANE: Thank y'all.

MARY TARVER: Thank you.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Chris, I don't see the list of employers. I tried to click a link that said employment resource directory, but the link doesn't work.

CHRIS RODRIQUEZ: I thought you just wanted the details on section 503.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Okay. Great.

MARY TARVER: Okay. Do we have any other comments or questions before we move on to, sorry Hayden is playing the Northwestern fight song, before we move on? All right. I think the next thing on the agenda was the post-secondary inclusive education alliance. Did we get started with that?

COURTNEY RYLAND: Sure. Marilee, is it okay if I give the update on that?

MARILEE ANDREWS: It's your initiative.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Thank you. So as you all know, or I hope you are all familiar, that Dr. Beckers with Southeast Louisiana University has the contract for this initiative. And so she and I have been talking recently and she was able to provide the update that you can actually see on your status report which is linked to our website. So they have been strategically planning for things to occur during the spring and summer semesters, I guess you can say. They want to do a monthly newsletter which covers several topics which includes interviews with already established post-secondary programs that are in Louisiana. They want to give updates on how the alliance is deal withing the covid 19 restrictions. They want to give day to day challenges or want to list the day-to-day challenges in running an inclusive transition program. They want to update their frequently asked questions section and they want to give resources and feature certain programs. Because not all programs are exactly alike. So they want to make sure that each of the programs kind of have their own show so to speak. They are going to continue with conducting zoom meetings across

the state. Recruit for the alliance and recruit for new programs to be initiated. And they also want to set up training webinars for the alliance. So the majority of the alliance is comprised of personnel from the universities or campuses that are providing an inclusive program or interested in providing an inclusive program.

And unfortunately, as we all know, there is turnover within every employment. So the Bossier Parish Community college which had a program or has a program that is certified, the lady that was running that for them is no longer with them. This kind of spearheaded Dr. Beckers to want to create something that trains the alliance members to get them up to speed, get them more informed so that they are on the same page with each other and that they are able to conduct more outreach on their own verses it all being the burden on Dr. Beckers and this specific initiative. So she's already got those in the works.

And also, just to give an update on the program, the new inclusive post-secondary education program, Louisiana State University Alexandria has successfully conducted fundraising and is on track to start their post-secondary inclusive education program for the fall 2021 semester. Grambling State University is still in the process of submitting the appropriate documents for grants for them to start the development of their program. And then also Southern University has also initiated contact with Dr. Beckers for them to begin the process. So we kind of have three different universities at different stages of the game so to speak. We have one that's almost finished with completing or finalizing for them to actually begin their project, their program. Then we have one that's still in the process of developing it. And then we have one that is just now starting the process. So that's an update with that initiative for right now. Do we have any questions?

EBONY HAVEN: Bambi has her hand raised.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I just wanted to add on yesterday

or the day before yesterday I connected someone with ULM with Dr. Beckers, a professional at ULM that is interested in having a program there. That's all there is. But there was a connection there and interest.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Thank you for that. I had not heard that yet. Anyone else?

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Nicole Banks has her hand raised and a question in the chat from Ms. Sue.

NICOLE BANKS: There are three different universities in the process of getting this program underway. Do they have a certain timeline or deadline they have to meet in order to get the funding or it's already allocated. Like first come first serve thing?

COURTNEY RYLAND: Talking about for applying for the grant to start a program?

NICOLE BANKS: Yeah. Because you said they were in the process, like two of them, Southern was just now reaching out. Grambling was in the process. But LSU already, you know, already get their stuff up and running and the program was going.

COURTNEY RYLAND: So with Grambling there is a deadline to submit applications for grants. So unfortunately, they had actually just missed the previous deadline. So they will have to wait until the next opening to submit their application again.

NICOLE BANKS: So that will be the same with Southern and ULM if ULM decides to come on also, right?

COURTNEY RYLAND: Correct.

NICOLE BANKS: Do we know when those deadlines are?

COURTNEY RYLAND: I don't know personally. But if that's something we need to collect information we need to get then I can ask Dr. Beckers.

NICOLE BANKS: Yeah. Just so we can know like when they have to get things up and running. Just so to know where they are in the process just to keep us updated on everything.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Sure. Y'all just forgive me. I'm just writing down some notes real quick.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I think sometimes people get confused when we say the word grant that they think

that's money. But it really is about granting them permission to have the program, right?

COURTNEY RYLAND: Correct.

NICOLE BANKS: Oh.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: It's not money. It's an approval to have that certain type of program.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Correct. And our initiative is for them to become certified for it to be a certified transition program. It's not a quick, easy thing if a university or college wants to just start a program. There is an actual legal process they have to go through in order to start that program. And then the school has to do fundraising. Which is what like I said about LSU Alexandria. They just about completed their fundraising for them to be able to fully fund their program to start in the fall semester.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Actually, they don't have to do fundraising. That's the way LSUA is doing it. I think other universities, like UL Lafayette, which my son attends, he just pays regular tuition. They pay the tuition that any other full-time student would pay there. And the university, depends on the university, perhaps the university invest some of their money into this program to help support the operations of the program in addition to the tuition being paid. And every universities tuition is different. So that makes a difference. The funding comes in different ways. The university has to figure out how they are going to pay for it or how they are going to be able to afford that program.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Like Ms. Polotzola just stated, and like I stated earlier, every program is different. I don't know that there's one that's exactly alike within the State of Louisiana. Maybe Bossier Parish and Baton Rouge Community College might be similar. Like I said, the universities or the colleges have their discretion on how they want to set it up. But they still have to go through the appropriate approvals to get that up and running. Still see hands raised for Ms. Banks and Polotzola. Okay. I believe Ms.

Victorian has her hand raised.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry. Did Ms. Sue have her hand raised before? I can let Sue talk.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Ms. Mary, who would you like to speak?

MARY TARVER: Temisha.

TEMISHA VICTORIAN: Thank you Ms. Mary. A quick thing I want to point out cause I had to step away a few minutes, so I missed a little bit about what Bambi had said. But I just want to recognize with us mentioning these entities when it comes down to HDC and community colleges who may not have the same type of support to get a program like this up and running that we realize there are certain barriers. And not just a funding issue, but also a resource and a staff issue at times. When you compare larger a university to something that is much smaller and getting that up and running and them having barriers to meeting those deadlines. I'm new to a lot of this, but I would like some transparency about some things being explored to see when those deadlines aren't met. What are the issues that they're having so moving forward we can have some type of resolution to see if there is something that can be helped to those universities, so they're not excluded. That could become a problem later on down the line if we're not doing the collection of finding out what's causing us, excuse me, them to meet those deadlines. Cause we want everybody to have a fair shot at the table regardless of the size of the university or other areas of disparities. So just to make it a fair process I think we need to look at possibly following those trends and collecting that to see what's happening. Cause we want every college to be able to provide or have a program if necessary. And I think collecting something like that would kind of help to look into the barriers that's being created. Thank y'all.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Thank you Ms. Victorian. And I will absolutely pass this along to Dr. Beckers. And

then I believe there's something in the chat. Is there any progress on including a college program in region five which is the Lake Charles region. And I believe it is Dr. Beckers' intent to do another, what did she call it, town hall meeting. Before covid happened, a town hall meeting had been done in North Louisiana which is how Grambling and LSUA got initiated with starting the process. And then covid happened and the South Louisiana town hall meeting did not occur cause it was in person. I believe she is trying to get something where it's virtual or hopefully maybe in person beginning around the fall semester for South Louisiana and hopefully that will garner some more interest in the Southern Louisiana universities and colleges. It looks like we have some more hands raised. Just want to make sure Ms. Polotzola and Ms. Killam.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Sue had her hand up first.

SUE KILLAM: For a little while and in the chat a couple times. So I wanted to just clarify, is this initiative just for certified transition programs? Cause that's all you're talking about CTPs. Or post-secondary education alliance.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Post-secondary inclusive education programs, correct.

SUE KILLAM: Right. So we are just talking about the CTP programs right now. Cause there are a bunch of other post-secondary opportunities that we haven't, some we have here and some we could have here. The arc, for example, autism now has a huge post-secondary education alliance and they actually, it's not CTP, not based on that model. Wondering if there's anybody that's kind of exploring the other models that are available around the country and best practice and evidence based. CTP is one, for sure. And it does have pretty specific guidelines. I put a link in the chat so people could go there to think college. That's sort of the body that oversees all the certified transition programs and helps with the development of them. There's already like a national kind of clearing

house, but that's all they do. You can really dig into what other states are doing and how they develop and how the funding works and how people can apply and who can collaborate with either community colleges or universities. The programs have to be within that university or that community college. The other programs that are available that are post-secondary focused is like ours paycheck. But then we also have a new one coming up with Families Helping Families NOLA which is a coding program for youth with autism and it involves post-secondary training and a coding training partner. There's others all around the country that we could help give information on if you all were interested.

COURTNEY RYLAND: So Ms. Killam, with the paycheck program, are you guys not on the alliance?

SUE KILLAM: I've never gotten an email about it. But I think that we would be. Like I know people know us. The governor's office has us usually talk. We're the one person at the table that's not a CTP. But we're always happy to go and talk about how to develop a post-secondary option for people. Ours is in partnership with the school system and LRS. And the coding program is in partnership, will be a partnership with LRS and some community training programs that are authorized under Louisiana Workforce Commission. I think, it's not that I feel excluded. I always get to talk. Except today I tried to sit back. I think there's other things too that would be interesting to add to this repertoire of things that students could do when they leave high school or think about as they're leaving high school. I've met a couple here that thought they wanted to go to university, but when they couldn't do it in town they didn't want to leave and go to the Lafayette program or Southeastern program just cause they didn't want to leave their community. I've never gotten an email. I would be happy to.

COURTNEY RYLAND: I will make sure that connection occurs. Thank you, Ms. Killam.

SUE KILLAM: Welcome.

COURTNEY RYLAND: I believe Ms. Polotzola's hand is raised.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Two points. Sue, I know that your program is listed on there on the website for LA pie. I don't know if you are being connected, but you are there listed as a program. But the other thing is in regards to a comment that was made earlier that triggered something. I believe my understanding of many of these programs the way they started, for instance LSU in Alexandria was started from parents going to the university asking. I know the life program that was started from parents in Lafayette asking for this program. And so I think it's two-fold that we need to advocate to our local universities or community college systems and ask them to look into having these programs. But the other issue is is to what Temisha had brought up in regards kind of some disparities at our post-secondary institutions. When I think about that the people who are going to advocate are the parents who are going to advocate for this opportunity are likely to be people who attended college themselves. Or have some connections to universities. So we have to remember that while that is one avenue, this other avenue is that we make a connection to our universities because another component is that we have some really great advocates that work within our university systems. And so we have to look at it as a two-prong approach. But I encourage advocates for people with disabilities to reach out to your local post-secondary institutions and talk to them about this.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Thank you Ms. Polotzola. Ms. Bayham, I think your hand is raised.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I just wanted to mention similar to what Sue was saying. I had mentioned to Dr. Beckers that LRS was interested in being at the table as a resource. And I'm not sure if someone on my staff has been contacted. But I know I have not. Because I don't think when you're trying to develop a program, I think it's very important you know your funding

sources. And LRS is a funding source for approved certified transition programs. So if you meet with her you may want to make sure she is connecting with myself or someone on my staff. I think that's an important piece if I was going to be developing a program, I think that would be an important thing to know.

COURTNEY RYLAND: I can absolutely do that as well. And I believe I have asked her about this before. Because she was working with particular colleges and universities in certain regions, I think she was asking for those regional offices.

MELISSA BAYHAM: She may have.

COURTNEY RYLAND: But if you're saying you would be preferred to be contacted directly.

MELISSA BAYHAM: As long as she's contacting someone. But if it's somebody who is not already a CTP program it's probably going to be better someone at state office to answer her questions.

MARY TARVER: Sorry. I have been distracted with Hayden. Are there any other questions? Are there any comments that I can't see the chat box.

EBONY HAVEN: No comments.

MARY TARVER: Thank you, Ebony. So the next thing on the agenda is for the customized employment training which is activity 5.1.3.

COURTNEY RYLAND: That's me again. So previously we had five employment support professionals who had started the job development certification mentoring process. But unfortunately due to covid and closures or turnover there are now just two of those ESPs who are still on track to complete that certification mentoring through Mark Gold and Associates. However, we are actually conducting, starting yesterday and today, a new discovery gateway training for employment support professionals. And we're doing that virtually instead of it being done in person. So those professionals will have six half days during this month to attend that gateway training. Once they finish the gateway training, they will then qualify to begin the certification mentoring process for that particular

component, which is discovery right now. And so we're paying for the discovery gateway. We're paying for certification mentoring for discovery. And then we are also going to be developing the job development gateway to be conducted probably August and then we'll be able to also assist those individuals with completing certification mentoring for job development. So then we will have individuals who have had the opportunity to go through a discovery gateway, a discovery certification mentoring process, job development gateway and the job development certification mentoring process. By the time they finish these two components there will be, hopefully, our intent there will be a slew of employment support professionals who are ready to start the systematic instruction component of customized employment. Unfortunately, that has to be done in person. So that's why Mark Gold and Associates has not offered that since because of covid. Also we are readily waiting for LSU Human Development Center to become a trainer in customized employment as well. So hopefully, again, by the time these individuals have gone through all of these steps to finish discovery and job development components they will be ready to start systematic instruction. And I hate to put you on the spot Ms. Sue, but do you happen to have any updates? I see your hand raised. Yes, ma'am.

SUE KILLAM: So there are five of us that are going through the train the trainer with University of South Florida through LRS and University of South Florida. And we just got our referrals, so we are actually completing, we are halfway through discovery with the clients right now. And we are working with the local VR counselors that referred and we have somebody in the north that has a referral there and then we have four of us doing some clients here. We should be done. We want to be done placement by July. And then I think we're talking about starting the training with USF in August. And if I'm off I'm not off by much. It might be September or something. Farther ahead. University of South Florida wasn't going to be able to come here.

We figured a way to do it virtually. We should be good by the end of the summer, beginning of the fall.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Thank you for that update. Ms. Mary, I believe Ms. Bayham has her hand raised.

MARY TARVER: Melissa.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I had a quick question for Sue. Angela had mentioned to me that we needed an update on this. I know things changed with your training with University of South Florida, covid and everything. So are y'all still going to receive training from USF on systematic instruction?

SUE KILLAM: Yes. So all of that. We are now meeting with them monthly. Our next meeting, have to look at my calendar. Set a regular Thursday morning once a month, by-weekly actually and then switched to once a month. We have another meeting coming up next week. We're on track to do all of that. I thought as I was talking that I'm quite sure maybe Demi updated you and maybe I should have updated you. I have been talking with Angela and now we're talking with the local counselor that Charlene and the regional manager in Shreveport have passed along through your counselors to get a customized employment referral.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I knew we were on track with the referrals. I just wanted to make sure we were on track with systematic instruction piece because I think that's a critical component. As we're making sure that we're developing our manual material we don't want to put that systematic instruction is required if that was not going to be a part of the certification training through USF.

SUE KILLAM: All the components. Yep.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Great.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Thank you ladies. Are there any other questions about the customized employment training?

EBONY HAVEN: A comment in the chat from Ms. Kelly Monroe. She says there are 15 people in the discovery gateway training.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Good deal. So if those 15

employment support professionals finish the discovery gateway and they conduct the certification mentoring they will also be eligible for us to fully fund them through job development gateway and certification mentoring as well. Good news. Anything else?

MARY TARVER: Thank you for the update on these activities and the work that has been done. Appreciate that. Are there any announcements? Okay. Well, then I guess are there any other comments or anything that we need to cover before we adjourn? Okay. Would somebody make a motion to adjourn.

MARILEE ANDREWS: You don't need one.

MARY TARVER: Oh, I don't. Okay. Thank you for telling me that. All right. Thank y'all very much for being on this meeting today. We had quorum so we're going to have a real summary meeting and everything. Very excited. Thank you everybody. We will talk soon. Thank you.